

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin

Mr. KIND. I thank my friend for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I do rise in support of the resolution before us. It is a very simple and straightforward resolution. It expresses our support and gratitude to our troops and our disapproval with the President's escalation plan in Iraq. I have believed for some time now that we are in desperate need of a new direction and not an escalation in Iraq.

It is not like we are confronted with a new plan by the President here today. We have tried three troop surges in the last 2 years alone, without the desired result. I don't know what the President sees or hears today that leads him to believe that the fourth time is a charm.

No, from the beginning, this has been the wrong war at the wrong time for the wrong reasons. We now know that Saddam Hussein did not, in fact, possess weapons of mass destruction. He had no involvement in the attacks on September 11. He had no links with al Qaeda. I believe then, as I do today, that while he may have been potentially dangerous, he was eminently containable.

But I too must share some responsibility for having supported the Iraq resolution in the fall of 2002. I did so while believing the President when he stated that the goal was disarmament and not regime change, that war would be a last resort and not a convenient option, that he would work through the U.N. Security Council and with the international community rather than taking unilateral action.

But I also believed that it was important at that time to get weapons inspection teams back in Iraq to search for weapons and to keep an eye on Saddam so he didn't develop capability to do harm. I also believe that we could not accomplish that goal without a threat of credible force hanging over Saddam's head.

When, in fact, we did accomplish it and got inspection teams back in with unfettered access, I was sitting through administration briefings asking them if we were cooperating with them and directing them to suspected sites. Of course we were, they said, but they are not finding anything. That is when that pit in my stomach first formed, that perhaps Saddam did what he said he did all along, and that is disarm.

That is when I, along with my friend and colleague, SHERROD BROWN, drafted a letter signed by 150 of our colleagues in January of 2003 asking the President to give the inspection teams time to do their job and not rush in because they were not finding anything.

But instead of heeding our advice, he ordered the inspection teams out, sent our troops in with insufficient forces to secure the peace, with no plan for the day after, with no clear objectives and with no exit strategy, all contrary to the Powell Doctrine. Now we are where we are today with over \$500 billion already spent, over 3,000 lives lost, over 23,000 injured who have returned home. And we are faced with no good options.

Yes, we do need a new direction and not an escalation. It is time for us to turn over responsibility for security to the Iraqi people so we can begin a redeployment of our forces, first within the country, let us get them off the front lines and off the main streets of Baghdad, where they can still play a support role, but which could also lead to a redeployment eventually out of country. We can then refocus our energies on the real national security threat, and that is dismantling the al Qaeda global network that we face, making sure we don't lose Afghanistan, making sure the Taliban doesn't reconstitute themselves and

making sure that we bring those who are directly responsible for September 11 to justice, like Osama bin Laden, who is still at large and roaming free today. Ultimately, this conflict cannot be solved militarily, but only by tough political compromises between the Sunnis, Shia and Kurds. We cannot do this for them.

We also need to get the Arab League involved, because they can help with reconstruction, they can help with security, and they can help add legitimacy to the Iraqi government. It is not in their interest to see the Sunni-Shia conflict spread outside of the Iraq borders and sweep the region, which is a very real threat today. Nor is it in Iran and Syria's interests to be on the opposite sides of a civil war that may break out in Iraq. That is what a plan, a new direction should look like, one that we should be pursuing, rather than just more of the same, stay the course.

Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity on three occasions to visit our military command and our troops in the field in Iraq. I also visited our troops during the height of our military engagement in the Balkans. Nothing has made me prouder to be an American than seeing our troops in action, because they are so very good. They are well motivated, they are well trained. They are the best our Nation has to offer.

I have had 18 military funerals in my Congressional district alone, most of which I personally attended. If I don't have to attend another military funeral, if I don't have to pick up the phone to call another grieving family, I will be one of the happiest people in the world. They are a constant reminder of the human toll this is having, not only with our troops but with their families and our communities. There is not a day that goes by when I am not concerned about the safety and welfare of our troops.

That is exactly why we should be debating this resolution, because it is imperative that war is a last resort, that we as policymakers do everything we can to get the policy right because of the impact it has on our troops, their family, and our communities. It is important that we give them a mission with which they can succeed. It is time to stop asking our troops to babysit a civil war.

It is time to ask the Iraqis to stand up. It is time to support this resolution and give the President a clear indication of where this Congress stands.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. Before yielding to the gentleman from Georgia, Mr. DEAL, I would just like to comment on my colleague from Wisconsin and say to have lost 18 of his constituents is heart wrenching, and I know that his statement is heartfelt. But, in fact, we are involved in the Arab League. We have involved five of the states surrounding, and every one of the ambassadors from this Arab League said, we didn't want you to go in, but you cannot leave. I would just say to the gentleman as well that we asked, critics asked you and others for a new team and a new plan. You have a new team, and you do have a new plan. The new plan is not the surge in troops. The new plan is coming into the neighborhoods in Baghdad with Iraqis, embedded American troops, cleaning them up, and holding them.

Mr. KIND. Will the gentleman yield for a brief comment?

Mr. SHAYS. A brief comment.

Mr. KIND. I was at the same meeting and I heard the same message from the ambassadors in the region. No one here is advocating an immediate withdrawal, just a different direction and a different strategy rather than what has failed in the past.

Mr. SHAYS. Reclaiming my time, what we do have is a new plan, and it is not the surge, it is cleaning up the neighborhoods and holding them with Iraqi troops embedded with American troops.